

# *SOLANUM TORVUM* SW.

Solanaceae/Nightshade Family

**Common Names:** Turkey berry, susumber, gully-bean, Thai eggplant, devil's fig

**Synonymy:** *Solanum ferrugineum* Jacq., *S. ficifolium* Ort.

**Origin:** Tropical America

**Botanical Description:** Evergreen, widely branched, prickly shrub or small tree, to 5 m (16 ft) tall; twigs stellate tomentose; stems armed with stout, flattened prickles, straight (usually) or slightly curved. Leaves alternate, simple, clearly petioled; blades oval to elliptic, unlobed to strongly lobed, to 25 cm (10 in) long; bases unequal, tips pointed; surfaces densely stellate hairy below, less dense above, with usually a few long prickles on midveins (especially above). Flowers many, in large branched clusters, with simple, mostly glandular hairs on axes; corolla bright white, to 2.5 cm (1 in) across, lobed about 1/3 of its length; lobes not recurved; stamens with prominent anthers. Fruit an erect, subglobose berry, to 1.5 cm (0.6 in) wide, yellow when ripe.

**NOTE:** Distinguished in Florida from other prickly *Solanum* spp., and other prickly shrubs, by its treelike habit, stout prickles, clearly petioled leaves with dense stellate hairs below, numerous bright white flowers followed by yellow grape-sized berries, and glandular hairs on flower stalks.

**Ecological Significance:** Cultivated in the tropics for its sharp-tasting immature fruits (Morton 1981). Has been found cultivated in Florida, though it is a federally listed noxious weed (Coile 1993). Considered a weed in 32 countries, a serious or principal weed in 7 of these (Holm *et al.* 1979). Noted as naturalized in peninsular Florida by Small (1933), in disturbed uplands and in swamps. Collected "only a few times" in south Florida by 1974 (D'Arcy 1974). Has been documented now by herbarium specimens in 6 south Florida counties plus Hillsborough and Columbia counties (Wunderlin *et al.* 1996). Reported so far from 3 natural areas in Broward and Collier counties (EPPC 1996; D. F. Austin, Fl. Atlantic University, 1998 personal communication).



**Immature fruits**

**Distribution:** A pantropical weed (D'Arcy 1974). Very common and weedy in the Pacific lowlands of Guatemala and other parts of the country (Gentry and Standley 1974). Considered weedy elsewhere in its native range as well (Holm *et al.* 1979, Correll and Correll 1982). Native from Mexico to Peru and Venezuela, and in West Indies and Bermuda (Morton 1981). Brought to Florida at least once before 1900 for cultivation trials (Westbrooks and Eplee 1989).

**Life History:** Sprouts from roots, forming thickets (N. Coile, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 1997 personal communication). In its native range, grows in wet thickets, dry brushy plains, woodland clearings, and rocky hillsides (Standley 1938, Adams 1972, Gentry and Standley 1974). Flowers and fruits all year (Adams 1972). As with most species of the genus, seeds probably dispersed by birds (D'Arcy 1974).



**Flowers, leaves**



**Habit (light green shrub)**